

As an Instructor-in-Residence with a doctorate in Education embedded in the School of Business, I have mentored many faculty through a semester long learning-centered instructional design process for more than a decade. This experience has left me to conclude that it is rare indeed to work with a faculty member who is enthusiastic and receptive to a faculty development process that is both rigorous and time consuming. James Sinclair has been one of those few exceptions. Having only been hired by the Accounting Department in 2011 and not yet tenured, James agreed to begin the instructional design process at the beginning of the fall 2012 semester.

Through the duration of the semester, James met with me regularly several times a week often for several hours. James' timely completion of all of my requests to produce pieces of the course design underscored his commitment to the process and his development. The substance of his questions, and persistent editing of the drafted pieces of the course revealed both an aptitude to embrace student-centered learning and a drive to provide his students the highest quality course design possible.

However, enduring the instructional design process was only one part of James' preparedness to teach ACCT 5535: Global Reporting and Analysis for the Masters in Accounting (MSA) for the spring semester of 2013. Professor Sinclair also had to learn how to use the University's Learning Management System (BlackBoard 9), as the course would be completely taught online, and to use an html editor (Adobe Dreamweaver6), as the content of the MSA courses reside as webpages on a School of Business server. In his effort to be more than functional but adept in all of the dimensions required to deliver a high caliber online course, James spent the duration of the winter break perfecting his technological skills.

Subsequently, James' foray into teaching a newly designed course online that adhered to the pedagogical shift required him to teach three sections of approximately sixty total students. This is no small feat for someone who had not previously taught online, to say nothing of delivering an untested course design. Yet, Professor Sinclair rose to the occasion. His steadfast effort when designing the course quelled many of the issues when teaching it. On one occasion, when a student challenged James on an earned grade, Professor Sinclair easily proved the validity of the grade earned given the rubric developed for the deliverable and the student's effort situated comparably to that of the other students. This single event reveals James' grasp of the pedagogical design shift expressed in his course design.

Upon the completion of the course, student evaluations revealed an exceptional experience with Professor Sinclair's ACCT 5535: Global Reporting and Analysis. Yet, still wishing to improve on the smallest point raised by the students' evaluations or issue jotted down in his own notes, James has and continues to meet with me for the purpose of refining the course design pending iterations. For someone who has shouldered so much responsibility early on in his academic career while pursuing tenure, James

can at least enjoy a sense of accomplishment given the Accounting Department's recognition of his efforts when it bestowed upon him the Masters in Accounting Teaching Award for 2013.

This statement provides the rationale for my whole-hearted support of James Sinclair for a UConn Teaching Fellow award. I am the Academic Director of the online MS in Accounting (MSA) program in the School of Business. James is one of 14 instructors in the MSA program. He taught online for the first time in the spring of 2013, and based on student reviews, he received the MSA Professor of the Year in his first year. Not only was James able to successfully create his course from the ground up without a textbook, he was able to transfer his teaching skills from a face-to-face environment to an online environment. James worked with a course designer to develop learning activities that enabled students to achieve the learning objectives for his course. But James went further; he learned the technology to create the web pages for Iris course portal site. Not only was he dedicated to teaching students, he was dedicated to learning new skills to help him teach students. Almost all of our online instructors rely on a technology person to help them create the content pages. James is totally self-sufficient. He can create the pages and transfer them to the online environment on his own. In addition, he learned to use the tools in HuskyCT on his own, watching various tutorials. I expect instructors in residence to become proficient at these skills over time. I was pleasantly surprised that a tenure-track professor who is expected to make research the primary focus, adjusted to the online teaching environment in a single year.

After the accounting awards banquet at which James received the MSA Professor of the Year award, I witnessed a conversation that brought tears to my eyes. Before teaching in the MSA program, James taught an undergraduate accounting course. During the semester, he asked students to meet with him individually to discuss their progress in the course. After the final exam, James distributed personal letters to several high-performing, or otherwise hard-working, students. The letter was addressed to the student's parents and recounted his assessment of the student and thanked the parents for their efforts in raising their child. I asked James for examples of the letters and each one was individually tailored to the student. One of the parents came up to James and thanked him profusely for his letter and for his instructional efforts. It was obvious to me that UConn was so lucky to have James. After the parent left, I felt like bowing down in the face of such a caring individual.

To summarize, James is excellent at both face-to-face and online teaching. Furthermore, although James doesn't teach our accounting PhD students, James interacts with them on a regular basis. I frequently see the PhD students in his office asking for research guidance. They know that James has excellent research skills because he makes insightful comments at each and every accounting department research colloquium. I am constantly learning from him.

James is a superb instructor role model. Not only is he an inspiration for face-to-face students, but in an era of increasing online instruction, James would be a superb resource to other online instructors. I am an ardent supporter of James's nomination!

I am contacting you regarding the ITL Teaching Fellow Award for which Professor James Sinclair was recently nominated. During the Spring of 2013, I was able to observe James' teaching style as a teaching assistant for his MS in Accounting Course known as Global Financial Reporting and Analysis. I have outlined three specific areas in which James stands out as an exceptional professor.

Curriculum development: To develop the course James sought information from accounting professionals regarding relevant global financial reporting and analysis issues. The information was then used to shape the curriculum for students with great success. James developed a course which allowed students to understand the valuation techniques used to assess a Company's value. A course of this nature allows students, particularly those entering the auditing profession, to truly comprehend how a company generates value for investors and what drives their key decisions. The lessons learned during the semester are invaluable in the auditing profession and exemplify James' dedication to developing a course that was not only interesting to students but also relevant among business professionals.

Innovative teaching methodologies: James teaching style was innovative in that students spent the semester learning the techniques necessary to prepare a firm valuation and then employed those techniques to prepare an actual valuation of a real life company. Each session introduced new concepts necessary to prepare a company valuation. The final capstone project allowed students to provide an investment recommendation using knowledge they gained throughout the semester. Simultaneously, students were required to critique each other's submissions in order to gain a broader perspective on valuation techniques which may vary depending upon the nuances of a specific company. This multifaceted approach reinforced the concepts taught during the course and challenged students to provide constructive feedback.

Interaction with students: James created a more personal online experience for students by contacting them individually with progress updates throughout the semester. This opened the lines of communication for many students and encouraged interactivity between the students and professor that is difficult to achieve in an online environment.

Overall, James possesses an exceptional teaching style that not only provided students with a new perspective on Company's financial information but also demonstrated his dedication to the teaching profession. Based upon my interactions with James, I found him to be truly deserving of an award recognizing his contributions to the University's learning environment.

I am excited to nominate Professor James Sinclair for the Teaching Fellow. Professor Sinclair joined UConn in the fall of 2011. From the start Professor Sinclair showed great commitment to students and teaching. This is very special for a pre-tenure faculty member. Most pre-tenure faculty members tend to concentrate on research and do the minimum in teaching. Professor Sinclair put equal emphasis on both teaching and research. His performance reflects such commitment. He is a good role model to pre-tenure faculty members on how to balance teaching and research.

In his first year Professor Sinclair taught ACCT 2101 Managerial Accounting a sophomore level course. Although the course was supervised by another professor, Professor Sinclair did an outstanding job in covering the materials and nurturing his students. He was always available to the students to advise and council not only on the content of the course but on careers and life in general. At the end of the semester he sent commendation letters to his top students, an action rarely done.

In his second year, we asked Professor Sinclair to teach online the MSA ACCT 5535 Global Financial Reporting and Analysis because the professor who taught the course left UConn. Professor Sinclair had to design the course from scratch because that professor took all the materials with him. I was reluctant to assign the course to Professor Sinclair as I felt it is too much of a burden to ask a pre-tenure professor to design a course and teach online for the first time. However, Professor Sinclair took the assignment seriously and did such an outstanding job that he won the MSA Professor of the Year Award.

I believe Professor Sinclair is an outstanding role model of commitment and creativity who is very deserving of the Teaching Fellow Award. I strongly support his nomination.
